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Top Troops

Perdue, Blackburn and Foster selected as Airmen of the Year for Kentucky Air National Guard

By Capt. Dale Greer
Wing Public Affairs Officer

Master Sgt. Rhett Perdue, Staff Sgt. Amanda Blackburn and Senior Airman Sharon Foster have been selected as the Kentucky Air National Guard's 2005 Outstanding Airmen of the Year.

The winners were chosen from a pool of 30 highly qualified nominees, making the judging extraordinarily difficult, said Senior Master Sgt. Mike Mitro, command chief master sergeant for the 123rd Airlift Wing.

"There are a lot of outstanding enlisted people in the Kentucky Air National Guard, and it's often tough to differentiate one from another," Chief Mitro said. "The candidates were all outstanding."

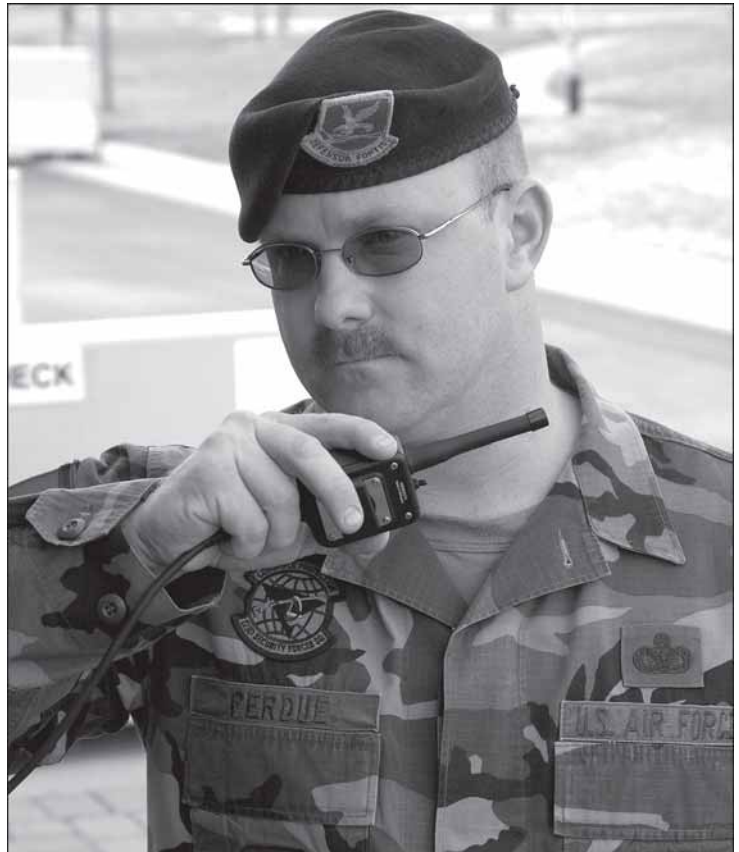
Each nominee was evaluated by the Kentucky Air Guard Chiefs' Council for performance in three areas — leadership and primary duty performance; significant self-improvement; and base and community involvement.

The winner in the senior NCO category, Master Sgt. Perdue, is

See *AIRMEN*, Page 3

Top Right: Master Sgt. Rhett Perdue is interim training manager in the 123rd Security Forces Squadron.

Bottom Right: Staff Sgt. Amanda Blackburn is an information management specialist in the 123rd Airlift Wing Headquarters.



Photos by Senior Airman Philip Speck/KyANG

New Year's resolutions can be tough to keep but physical fitness is our obligation

H

appy New Year to all and welcome to the January 2005 UTA.

You might be interested to know that the celebration of the New Year is the oldest of all holidays, dating back more than 4,000 years.

Over the years it has become associated with some interesting traditions, and almost every nation has its own. For example, in Greece a special New Year's bread is baked with a coin buried in the dough for good luck (although biting into or inadvertently swallowing the coin might have an immediate, opposite effect).

In the United States, a kiss is shared at the stroke of midnight, and the undertaking of New Year's resolutions is almost universal in nature.

If you made some personal resolutions this year — to lose weight, stop smoking or exercise more — you are not alone.

But anyone can make New Year's resolutions; the challenge is to maintain them.

Memberships for fitness centers typically double between January and March but tail-off rapidly toward the end of the year.

Well, we're three weeks into the new year, and if you've already surrendered and returned to your old ways again, you're not alone.

It's estimated that only 20 to 30 percent of people making resolution commitments



Col. Mark Kraus
123rd Airlift Wing Commander

actually sustain them. Of the Top Ten most common New Year's Resolutions, half have to do with personal health/fitness while the rest address "external" issues — a desire to be more organized, stick to a budget, find a better job and so forth. Motivation to change or the rationalization to resist change seems to run to the heart of individual success.

Resolutions are most often associated with, but are certainly not limited to, individual endeavors. Whole organizations can and do embrace change for the betterment

of themselves or the individuals that comprise their memberships.

The Air Force and the Air National Guard, for example, are shifting cultural mindsets on the physical fitness of their members — and the reason, succinctly put by Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John Jumper is this:

"We deploy to all regions of the world, living in tent cities and working on flight lines in extreme temperatures. Some of our airmen today are operating from inside Iraq, subject to attack, and could be called upon to help defend the base, a trend that will surely increase in the growing expeditionary nature of our business. The amount of energy we devote to our fitness programs is not consistent with the growing demands of our warrior culture. It's time to change that. I want to make very clear that my focus is not on passing a fitness test once a year. More important, we are changing the culture of the Air Force. This is about our preparedness to deploy and fight. It's about warriors. It is about instilling an expectation that makes fitness a daily standard — an essential part of your service."

General Jumper has published no less than six "Fit to Fight" articles outlining his vision for the Air Force standards for physical fitness, and his vision has been formal-

See FITNESS, Back Page

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Airmen represent the best of the Kentucky Air Guard

Continued from Front Page

interim training manager in the 123rd Security Forces Squadron.

Since stepping into the position in 2004, he has reorganized the squadron's training program from top to bottom, instituting a comprehensive, unit-wide plan that incorporates all readiness and ancillary training requirements.

Sergeant Perdue also created an improved system for tracking ancillary training accomplishments, developed new procedures to ensure the proper documentation of training records and directed multiple field training exercises at the Wendell Ford Training Center in Western Kentucky.

"Our training program really gained a lot of momentum this past year because of Sergeant Perdue," said 1st Lt. Mary Decker, commander of the 123rd Security Forces Squadron.

"He just has an incredible amount of energy, and you can always count on him to do whatever it takes to make our unit better."

Decker noted that Perdue, a part-time Guardsman who's been on active duty for more than a year, possesses natural leadership ability.

"All the airmen look up to him because he's a straight shooter and they know he has their best interests at heart.

"We're very fortunate to have a key leadership person who's working so hard to move forward."

The top airman in the NCO category, Staff Sgt. Blackburn, serves as an information management specialist in the 123rd Airlift Wing Headquarters.

During the past year, Sergeant Blackburn ensured the effective utilization of more than 2,800 workdays, oversaw a smooth transition to new wing leadership and flawlessly supervised protocol duties during visits by the president, vice president and first lady of the commonwealth.

She also provided superior handling of all scheduling and travel plans for senior wing leaders.

"Sergeant Blackburn is an outstanding troop who does a terrific job staffing the administrative details for wing headquarters," said Col. Mark Kraus, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing.

The job can be difficult, Colonel Kraus



Senior Airman Philip Speck/KyANG

Senior Airman Sharon Foster is a relocation employment and readiness technician in the 123rd Military Personnel Flight.

said, because it covers a myriad of responsibilities and requires extremely close attention to detail.

"Sergeant Blackburn has to have a broad range of experience and a depth of experience in a number of different areas," he said. "Some of the details are critical, and I trust her completely to take care of them.

"She has all the qualities you look for in an NCO — dress and appearance, military bearing, her desire to do everything in an excellent fashion."

The colonel also praised Sergeant Blackburn for taking the lead on several projects, including many VIP functions.

"Typically, she is the first contact a VIP has, and she makes sure they get a good, positive experience when they visit the 123rd Airlift Wing. That shows visitors the caliber of the professionals that we have here on the base. It sends a message about who we are as a unit and that we're serious about what we do."

The winner in the airman category for 2005, Senior Airman Sharon Foster, is a relocation employment and readiness technician in the 123rd Military Personnel Flight.

The unit's commander, Lt. Col. Dawn Muller, said she was "everything you could ask for in an airman."

"She really represents the core values —

integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do."

The part-time Guardsman, who has been on active duty for more than a year, is responsible for serving as a liaison between order clerks, military pay and the medical unit to coordinate all facets of mobilization.

In the past year, she coordinated and tracked the Military Personnel Appropriation worday program for the entire wing, formulated and submitted MPA request packages to Air Mobility Command and performed analysis on a wide range of data necessary for mobilization reports.

"What Airman Foster is doing is really war-driven," Colonel Muller said. "They've seen an almost exponential increase in the amount of work they do, but I have never heard her complain about anything. She has such forward motion and always looks to roll up her sleeves and get the job done."

The three Outstanding Airmen of the Year will be honored at an awards banquet to be held March 5 in the Paroquet Springs Conference Center, 395 Paroquet Springs Drive. The social hour is scheduled for 6 p.m. and dinner starts at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$20 each and may be purchased from any chief.

Military providing tons of relief to tsunami victims

By Gerry J. Gilmore
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Servicemembers deployed across Southeast Asia remain busy “providing literally tons of relief” supplies to impoverished victims of the Dec. 26 tsunamis, a U.S. officer reported Jan. 13 from Utapao, Thailand.

U.S. Sailors, Marines and Airmen continued the massive airlift and sealift of food, medicine and water earmarked for Indonesians, Thais, Sri Lankans and others whose homes and businesses were washed away, Col. Mark Schissler said.

“We’re making a lot of progress,” said Colonel Schissler, commander of the 374th Air Expeditionary Wing. Operation Unified Assistance recovery efforts, he said, already have made much headway in Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Relief workers are “still working hard to get enough food into Indonesia,” which was hardest hit by the natural disaster, he said.

The tsunamis killed at least 150,000 people across the region. An estimated 100,000 of those victims have died in Indonesia.

The mission’s key priority is “stopping suffering where it’s still going on,” Colonel Schissler said. Many people living on the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, remain displaced and homeless. Efforts are ongoing to provide food, water and other aid to those victims, he said.

U.S. servicemembers were hurriedly called away from their families to participate in the operation. But “that doesn’t distract us much from the job at hand,” the colonel said.

“When you get out and do the mission,” Colonel Schissler said, “you find that you’re providing direct aid” to people in need. Such work “is very rewarding,” he said.

The colonel said he “couldn’t be more proud” of the response of the U.S. servicemembers. He acknowledged a group of them based in Yokota, Japan, who joined the relief effort after just returning from a tour in the Middle East.

“We asked them if they would deploy with us,” Colonel Schissler said, adding that their answers were “universally, ‘yes.’” Servicemembers, he said, get “an extra boost” to their morale when they deploy on humanitarian missions.



2nd Lt. Ben Sakrisson/USAF

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia — A pallet of water is unloaded from a C-130 Hercules here Jan. 10. More than 18,000 Marines, Sailors, Airmen, Soldiers and Coast Guardsmen with Combined Support Force 536 are working with international militaries and non-governmental organizations to aid the affected people of Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia after a magnitude 9.0 earthquake Dec. 26 triggered devastating tsunamis.



Master Sgt. Val Gempis/USAF

DAMBULA, Sri Lanka — Airman 1st Class Emily Starcher helps Sri Lankan relief workers unload boxes of vegetables from an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter during an Operation Unified Assistance mission here Jan. 12. She is a flight engineer assigned to the 33rd Rescue Squadron at Kadena Air Base, Japan.

Guard being transformed to meet new missions

**By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell
National Guard Bureau**

ARLINGTON, Va. — It was a year ago in May when Army Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum announced his plan to transform the National Guard into a more ready, reliable, essential and accessible force to help defend this country — at home and abroad.

Blum had been chief of the National Guard Bureau for little more than a month when he told Guard leaders in the 54 states and territories, the entire National Guard family, and the national media his concept for moving the 460,000 members of the Guard into the 21st century.

He calls it The Way Ahead. He calls it doing what is right for America.

In a nutshell, Blum has insisted during his first year on the job, the Guard has to change from a strategic reserve that was standing by during the Cold War to help this country fight Warsaw Pact forces attacking Western Europe through the Fulda Gap into an operational force that is already actively engaged in the global war against terrorism in this country and overseas, including Iraq and Afghanistan.

Why? The ways this country's military does business have changed in the past 30 years or so. It has changed from a force bolstered by the draft to an all-volunteer, recruited force. The 9-11 attacks on the homeland hammered home the idea that we have to be ready to march with no, or limited, notice because we no longer have the luxury of time to build up our military forces. We have to be prepared to take on a faceless enemy that employs all forms of terrorism and guerilla tactics as opposed to a standing army.

One thing will not change. The Guard will not give up its "Minuteman" ethos of being ready to roll out on a moment's notice. It will remain a state or territorial military force, commanded by the governors, unless its members are activated for federal duty. It is still an organization with a state and a federal mission which makes it unique among the military services.

"The Guard has been an operational force

since 1636 as far as our state missions are concerned. When the governor calls, you've got to be there now," said a National Guard Bureau spokesman.

Since 9-11, we've had to transition from a strategic reserve as a federal entity to what we have always been in the states, an operational force."

Transformation has a lot of moving parts, and it's being done on the move, while the Guard is engaged in one of the busiest times in its 367-year history - while tens of thousands of Soldiers and Airmen are participating in homeland security missions and deployed overseas. One public affairs officer has compared it to changing an engine in a car that is speeding down a highway.

Jointness, leveraging and rebalancing are some of the buzz words that describe how

They are a powerful tool for the governors during a flood, riot or other emergency, because they can command the activities of their own Guard people and direct the activities of Guard forces that might be brought in from other states under the provisions of the Emergency Mutual Assistance Compact. They can also provide information to the U.S. Northern or Pacific Commands.

"Leveraging" means using the Guard forces that already exist to meet the new requirements of homeland security and homeland defense.

That's important, the spokesman said, because National Guard members are generally the first military people on the scene of a catastrophic event in this country.

Leveraging includes organizing reaction forces in each state, which can instantly respond to natural disasters and civil disturbances, from existing combat-type units. About 22 states have them and 28 more are organizing them. Blum would like to have one such force in every state.

It also means creating 12 Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear high yield Explosive Enhanced Force Response Packages (CERFP) with existing civil support teams, which are trained to detect chemical, biological, and nuclear agents, and

with existing ground combat, engineer and medical units. The CERFPs are being built around civil support teams in California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington state, and West Virginia.

"Rebalancing" has many faces. Overall, it means putting the people into the positions where they can do the most good.

That includes reorganizing and retraining the force so it can help support the modern war-fight, being available with suitable numbers and equipment to satisfy the governors, and making deployments more predictable. It is in keeping with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's mandate that all components be organized so the active forces can engage any enemy anywhere for between 15 and 30 days before the reserve components have to be called up.

“

We will be better understood by our active duty counterparts. We will then be seen as for what we are — ready, reliable, essential and accessible.

”

— Army Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum,
Chief of the National Guard Bureau

the Guard is transforming.

"Jointness" means combining three separate entities in the 54 states and territories - the adjutants generals' offices, the Army Guard's state area commands, and the state Air Guard headquarters - as well as the National Guard Bureau into joint staff headquarters, including members of other services, which function like the U.S. military's major combatant commands.

"We will be better understood by our active duty counterparts," Blum predicted. "We will then be seen for what we are — ready, reliable, essential and accessible."

The Guard Bureau became a joint staff headquarters last summer. The state and territorial headquarters began functioning as provisional joint commands in October. The intent is to have all of them fully operational by October 2005, the start of the 2006 fiscal year.

Fitness

Continued from Page 2

ized in the latest edition of AFI 36-2618, The Enlisted Force Structure.

In chapter 3, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Gerald R. Murray defines airman responsibilities. In part, airmen must "Strive and maintain the highest level of personal readiness to meet Air and Space Expeditionary Force mission requirements" (paragraph 3.1.2).

Listed among those items for personal readiness is a statement that airmen must "Be physically ready to accomplish the mission. Keep themselves in good physical condition and meet Air Force fitness standards. Participate in the Air Force Fitness Program" (paragraph 3.1.2.2).

He further defines NCOs' responsibilities to not only stay in good physical

condition but to also "set a positive example for subordinates. Lead the way by promoting, supporting and participating in the Air Force Fitness Program and their unit's physical fitness training. Incorporate physical training into their team's duty schedule."

It's pretty clear that Command Chief Murray is serious about the commitment of the enlisted force to fitness, but make no mistake: The fitness program is a "commander's program" and commanders bear responsibility for the physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being of those in their charge.

They must set the tone and tenor in each of these vital areas and then jump ahead to lead the pack.

There are many important by-products gained from a regular exercise program. Among them is the reduction of STRESS! With a reduction of stress comes an increase in productivity, improved overall health and sharpened

copied skills.

Consistent feedback from December's Wingman Day Activities is that members of our wing are eager to find avenues to reduce stress in their lives, and a steady regimen of physical activity is a tool to do just that.

As your commander, I am firmly committed to utilize our time together and the resources available to allow you to employ that tool. The rest is up to you.

Earlier, I said that motivation or the absence of it divides those who succeed or fail at sustaining their New Year's resolutions.

Our wing resolution is to forge ahead to be physically fit. Our motivation is that, as warriors, we have an obligation to the nation to do so.



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